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## EDUCATIONAL NEWS AND EDITORIAL COMMENT

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### AN UNUSUAL REPORT

By some insane logic it is considered respectable for superintendents' reports to be very prosaic, very statistical, and very dull. Education, eternally human, eternally varied, eternally fascinating, to judge by the average board-of-education pamphlet, is as impersonal as Bradstreet or Destiny, a dehumanized state factory, a producer of citizens by some occult juggling of tables, budgets, desk-space, bills paid, and janitor service. How, indeed, from a priori reasoning, such documents could fail to be shot full of human color is beyond the incredible; but fail they always do. Obviously superintendents' reports and their like should be more fascinating than novel, play, or magazine; but practically they somehow come out of the coffee-mill of convention ground finer than the dustiest seashore sand—dry as the biscuit with which the Red Queen expected Alice to quench her thirst.

This being the case, it is with a thrill of gratitude that one lights on an educational bulletin not yet mummified. Such a document is the report of Thomas W. Churchill, president of the Board of Education of New York, bearing date of September 1, 1914. Extraordinary is not too startling an epithet for this production. In the words of an unconventional correspondent, Mr. Churchill "seems to be butting into education all the way from Ostend to Millhausen," "to be using search-lights not usually employed."

Whether it is a good thing to butt in all the way from Ostend to Millhausen, Mr. Churchill will prove in the sequel. We are interested for the present in his audacity in being human. As president, he does not regard himself as a kind of sublimated head-office-clerk. Many problems come under the presidential eye; some for a touch and pass, maybe, but in that brief touching there lies food for New York educators from now till September, 1915. Some will not like the food, but there will be new and healthy stirring ere better provender is found.

### VOCATIONAL TRAINING

Vocational training, here made interesting by the very vastness of the problem, occupies the premier place in Mr. Churchill's pamphlet.

The subject itself is shopworn, but the "summary of recommendations" ending his discussion is at least practically illuminating:

To establish a bureau of school extension and co-operation with a director and assistant director, four trade supervisors, six district supervisors, a chief clerk, twelve stenographers, a hundred teachers, including those to be assigned as investigators.

To designate for management by this bureau six elementary schools for immediate introduction of a prevocational training in the fundamental operations and principles that are common to many trades, applied mathematics, the elements of machines, and knowledge of occupations; these schools to be organized on the plan of alternate use of the classrooms, shops, auditoriums, and playgrounds and to furnish from their shops such equipment for public schools as may be designated by the bureaus of buildings and supplies.

To designate, under the management of the bureau of school extension and co-operation, six schools in which older boys and girls shall receive instruction for skilled occupations and which shall introduce the co-operative system by which the pupils shall do actual work in manufacturing and commercial houses.

To extend, under the management of the bureau, the investigation of New York occupations.

The industries of New York, it is true, are an epitome of all industry; but in the emphasis on the plain fact so often forgotten, that vocational education must train for the immediate, the local, the necessary vocation, is much value. A similar survey of local industry in every city where vocational education is a branch of learning would result in bringing the balloon of propaganda much nearer the solid earth. Such a survey is recommended in the Chicago report noted below.

#### EDUCATIONAL SPECIALISTS

The following paragraph on educational specialists and their relation to the schools cannot be passed by:

The capitalized knowledge of the world is steadily increasing. If each new generation is called upon to assimilate what its predecessors had to master and, in addition, what has been learned since the school period of its predecessors, the curriculum will break down under its own weight. No work of this board during the past two years has been of greater public service than its application of the layman's common-sense to the accumulative theory of the educational expert. Excision has become a quantitative necessity. . . . But a deeper question than reduction is involved: If our schools are created to supply that training which is of the greatest value for community life, then the solution of our educational problem must lie less in the preparation of a

uniform body of information for all children. It must be found rather in an education that is best fitted to train a citizen who has not information and culture only, but the ability to earn his own living, and make his own way, as a man of character. There is no class of persons more competent to attack this problem than those who are in daily contact with the life of the city and its children. The experience of the scholastic, of the expert in book-learning and in the desiccation of knowledge for teaching purposes, may tend to isolate him from real needs of the world and may disqualify him in large measure for so complete a power over the training of humanity as traditional school practice has given him.

Wise words, these, and much needed, in a time when we are deluged with fads, theories, hobbies, and propagandas of all sorts!

#### FUNCTIONS OF THE PRINCIPAL

Nineteen pages of the report, by no means the dullest, are devoted to an unorthodox and refreshing symposium on the duties of a school principal, to which all types of school have by representative contributed. Many of the trenchant comments made are tempting, but space forbids the quoting of them. Room there is, however, for one or two on a petty but vexing problem not often noticed—the problem of the relation of superintendent and visitors.

“We have visits for information from the Gerry Society, court officers, teachers and principals from our own and other cities, superintendents, parents, students of teachers’ colleges, newspaper reporters, insurance agents, dealers in school books and supplies, building inspectors, investigators, inspectors from the comptroller’s office, supervisors of various kinds, directors and attendance officers,” writes one contributor mirthlessly, and “as a matter of mathematics there is not time to attend to them,” adds a second. With admirable restraint another comments: “The distressing thing about visitors is their wealth of time.” “A persistent tradition leads the visitor always to insist on seeing the head man.” What is the solution? Many principals urge that “office hours or office days be made a subject of discussion by the principals,” a time agreed upon, and standing announcement made of office hours on cards to be issued to parents, a class of visitors which with the best of intentions seriously hampers the principal’s efficiency.

“Apparently,” says Mr. Churchill with regard to the whole symposium, “the great majority of principals want to be in classrooms, not ornamenting an office. They experience a real regret in being diverted from essential and constructive work and put upon supplementary and

unnecessary things." An obvious discovery—yet how many school boards ever find it out? "In this protest against uniformity," he continues, "I see a tendency not to be suppressed by rough-shod regulation, the expression of a natural instinct for intellectual freedom, that will be realized in experiment, improvement, and progress. It needs encouragement, not suppression."

Then follows the most courageous paragraph in the report:

I see no insuperable obstacle to giving to a principal responsibility and power similar to that of a captain of a ship so that he can, subject to the limitation of his financial allowance, organize his help, his hours, and his program of classes in accordance with his own judgment. This is no army. There is no campaign requiring equal advance all along the line. The demand for uniformity for pupils as a condition of transfer from school to school has not been proved. Principals tell me a child from Indiana or Maine, trained under different conditions, is adjusted to school conditions here without loss. The type of mind that centralized management is producing in our schoolmasters is not the one which the exercise of a principal's functions requires. We are not particularly concerned with the abstract question of the relative worth of a monarchical or democratic system in our schools, but we are interested in the sort of spirit animating our principals. We cannot remove them; we should not cripple them. We need the initiative of some as we need the conservatism of others. We can avail ourselves of differences of type and character among all; each will seek to serve the city best in accordance with his talents.

#### THE NEW HIGH SCHOOL

On high schools Mr. Churchill also has views. After a criticism of the high school as a preparatory school to college, he traces the disastrous effects of that ideal. His view is implicit in his phrase, "that portion of our school system containing grades higher than the eighth year." When the high school is cut off from the grades, and made an entity apart, the result is, in his judgment, unfortunate—"an adherence to type rather than [the] discovery of wider usefulness." "In these organizations the gladiatorial theory of existence," continues this singular president, "needs to give way before the more modern principle of public service; not so much the survival of the fittest but the fitting of the greatest possible number to survive." The high schools have been "under official encouragement to make their chief concern that small portion of the children which is preparing to enter colleges, universities, and professional schools. Through a centralized and restrictive management they have been taught that 'they are intended for and

should be confined to our boys and girls who are highest in book-learning.'"

The western high schools must be made the model for New York, and the president's specific recommendations are that each principal be given liberty to shape his own curriculum to meet the needs of his pupils; the board of education is "exhorted to dissipate the uniform requirements for graduation from high schools and to provide encouragement for each school through counsel of teachers and principals to arrange its own courses for the benefit of its own children subject to such requirements of economy of management as the circumstances require." And since the Regents' examinations stand in the way of this individualization of the high schools, Mr. Churchill promises to deal with them in a separate broadside.

We venture to submit that few high-school teachers will attend the funeral when the Regents' examinations die. A kind of *cursus honorum* they are, and as empty as that earlier Roman institution came to be. Whether or not great benefit will come from a closer union of high school and graded school is not so clear; something is gained by the pupil through his experiencing the two conventions of study and recitation, that of the grades and that of the high school. The high school is as near a college atmosphere as many pupils ever attain, and as such is obviously of great value. Indeed, in his enthusiasm for the practical, need of which he sees to be so distressing, Mr. Churchill has gone too far in his reaction from mere "book-learning," which is still a somewhat useful thing, with peculiar merits not to be gainsaid even by the business managers of whole continents of cities. Yet, with these and other reservations, the report remains a remarkable educational document; of significance for other cities, and for smaller schools; significant if it does no more than arouse a keener-edged discussion and perhaps the refutation of some of its implications.

H. M. J.

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#### RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE EUROPEAN TRIP

Returned from their extended study of European educational conditions, the delegates of the Chicago Board of Education have now made their recommendations. Evidently the lessons Europe has to offer the United States in education resemble the lessons it has to offer elsewhere: they merely urge us to do more thoroughly and efficiently the very reforms we have had in mind for a long time and have but

imperfectly carried out. In our school systems we have shown the same negligence and carelessness that characterize most of the affairs of our municipal life. Thus, if an American commission is sent to Germany to study municipal government, it returns with the recommendation that we do in a very much better way about everything that we are now doing. Our schools are to their schools as our cities to their cities. We are not sufficiently thorough.

None of the four main lines of recommendation made by the Chicago delegates introduces any new idea. They urge the city to guard school buildings against the distracting noises of the city and otherwise to provide for the physical welfare of the pupils; to establish a central municipal school of commerce and industry; to gather and systematize information concerning the industrial and commercial life of the city as a suitable basis for future educational policies, these policies to emphasize vocational and continuation training; and finally, to give to the elementary schools a larger share of school funds. In every one of these fields American school authorities have been dabbling. Europe exceeds us only in thoroughness and efficiency.

The recommendations are summarized as follows:

1. That the Board of Education request that the City Council shall enact such ordinances as will provide for the use of wooden blocks or asphaltum for the paving of streets adjacent to schools, and extending for at least a distance of one block from the boundaries of school premises. Also that in the construction or repair of elevated railways provision shall be made in the neighborhood of the schools for such solidarity of structure as will serve as a preventive of the excessive vibration to which disturbing noises are traceable.

2. That measures be taken as soon as may be practicable for the establishing of a central school of commerce and technology.

3. That provision be made for establishing a continuous evening school college.

4. That conferences be provided of officials representing the educational and the co-ordinate branches of the municipal government, whose office it shall be to investigate and to report on ways and means of further co-operation in the providing of playgrounds, swimming-pools, and other means of recreation.

5. That a plan be inaugurated for the establishing of an educational museum or center for the assembly of such materials and models as may be helpful to intelligent study.

6. That measures be taken to provide for the collection and tabulation of such information relating to the industrial and professional interests of Chicago as will be helpful as a means for determining plans of management and in establishing future policies for the schools.

7. That a survey be made to determine the relative and rightful claims of the elementary schools in our educational expenditures, and with the purpose in view of an adjustment of the apportionment of the public revenues to such an equitable basis as will conserve the interests of the schools of the common people.

8. That the creation and maintenance of vocational and continuation schools be encouraged, that opportunities be offered for the guardianship and instruction of all children who through necessity withdraw at an early age from the schools.

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### WE ARE AGAIN LESS INTELLIGENT

The report of the Chicago delegates illustrates one use to be made of foreign school methods; the following comparison illustrates another. It is of a type that has been dinned into us since we first discovered Europe, and the present instance is no better and no worse than a more familiar comparison. German schools have been persistently held up to us as models of perfection. Perhaps for this reason it is with something like relief that one reads of the virtues of English secondary schools.

The present exponent of the comparative method is Mr. George L. Fox, in a paper read at the Hampden County Teachers' Association. The report given of the meeting by the *Springfield Weekly Republican* quotes him as comparing the intellectual quality of American and English secondary schools to the distinct disadvantage of the former. We are so used to being told how stupid we are that it no longer stings; but to be told that we are more stupid in a new way has at least the merit of novelty.

In speaking of English secondary schools Mr. Fox defined them as the educational institutions where English boys and girls from thirteen to nineteen were prepared for the universities and medical schools, army and navy colleges, and business life. The classroom work at Rugby, the report goes on,

much surpassed work done by pupils of a similar age in this country. Written statements made by pupils of the work done in the school showed that the English boy before entering the university at nineteen covered in mathematics, classics, modern languages, and history as much as the American boy covers before going to college and in the first two years of the college course. Mr. Fox also read from the courses of study of different schools in proof of the same thing.

The grammar and practice in composition in ancient and modern languages are followed with a thoroughness and detail that is wholly unknown in this country. Passages from Shakespeare and George Eliot are often given for



translation into Latin to boys in the two highest classes of these schools, tasks which graduate students in American colleges would find it difficult to perform. The most talented pupils were trained in original composition in Latin and Greek.

The character of the examinations for scholarships in these schools and those for the Oxford and Cambridge school certificates showed far more difficult tests than are given to pupils of similar age in this country. Textbooks in different subjects, like algebra, geometry, trigonometry, history, classics, and modern languages, are so much more difficult than those used in this country that an attempt to use them here would meet with a most vigorous protest from pupils, parents, and teachers. The Rhodes scholars from the United States, though graduates of colleges, found themselves unable to compete with English boys just entering the university from the secondary schools, who were three or four years younger than they, in the great honor examinations of the Oxford schools. There is a great difference between the fearless and triumphant way in which the English boy faces and passes at different stages of his career difficult examinations, and the nervous alarm that many American boys feel when they attempt the much easier tests for entrance into college in this country, if they do not try to slip in by certificate.

Just how much value lies in all this is not very clear. A certain skepticism may be pardoned on one point: it is hard to believe that anywhere on this habitable globe examinations are faced in the "fearless and triumphant way" lauded by Mr. Fox, school-boy nature being much the same the world over. The Rhodes scholars are a point that strikes home. But the translating of Shakespeare into Latin proves little; American pupils very likely put the same mental energy into manual training or football.

Evidently the whole comparison hinges upon the relative homogeneity or heterogeneity of the scholars in English schools as compared with our own jumbled high-school constituency. In fact, with all due respect to Mr. Fox, his comparison illustrates the superficial nature of all such parallels. Because the English tradition requires an intensive study of the classic languages where the American emphasizes other subjects, it therefore does not follow that the brain stuff of English school boys is better than the brain stuff of American school boys. Textbooks, it is true, are a fairer basis of computation, but even they are not wholly satisfactory. Until the basis of comparison be made a more vital, a more comprehensive one; until some common and significant ground can be found upon which both sides may meet for comparison, we may fairly doubt the validity of these conclusions.

We may go abroad for certain practical suggestions, as did the Chicago committee, or we may go abroad as Mr. Fox does with an open,

but not a penetrating, mind, resolved to confess inferiority if we are indeed inferior, but forgetting to seek real bases for comparison. The unit of measure for a comparison of intellectual qualities must be the same in both cases; the qualities measured must have equal standing, must be exercised on tasks of somewhat nearly equal importance. Until we find the spiritual arithmetic which can cast up accounts so diverse as the minds of American and of English school boys, we can never hope for a true relative rating of our schools. And after all, what does it matter?

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### ASTONISHING GROWTH OF NIGHT SCHOOLS

The press is filled with announcements of the tremendous sweep over the whole country of the night-school idea. The figures of attendance are almost incredible. Richmond, Virginia, enrolls 4,000 students in 11 schools; Chicago has 35 schools with more than 25,000 attendance; St. Louis has 20,000 pupils in 22 schools; Milwaukee, 6,000 in 13 schools; Grand Rapids, Michigan, 4,000 students; Kansas City, 3,000; Minneapolis 7,000; and hundreds of smaller cities report that their night-school facilities are taxed to the utmost. Every city reports a rapid increase in attendance, the figures from St. Louis being typical of the general 50 per cent increase: in 1912 there were 9,700 students in St. Louis night schools; in 1914, 20,000. Chicago has 8,000 more at the opening of the year than the total enrolment for last year. Three years ago, Richmond began with 43 pupils and two teachers; in six months there were 800 pupils and 18 teachers. The school grew only about 100 the second year, but during the third year a system of co-operation between school and employers increased the attendance to 4,000.

The students who are thus attracted range in age from 14 to 65. There is no upper limit. By far the largest percentage are comparatively young men and women, roughly classified in three great groups: those who feel that they are handicapped by inadequate general education; foreigners who desire a command of English; and workers who wish to become more skilled in their occupations. The following data, collected from ten cities in Wisconsin exclusive of Milwaukee, indicate pretty fairly the general distribution of night-school students:

Men, 6,887; women, 7,389; total number enrolled, 14,276; those leaving, 3,030; withdrawals, 443; returned to regular school, 17; enrolment at close of school, 6,791; average weekly attendance, 6,712. Enrolment by employment: bookkeepers, 336; stenographers, 379; laborers, 637; students, 208;

housekeepers, 769; store clerks, 940; at home, 518; clerical work, 275; machinists, 469; carpenters, 124; factory workers, 1,796; electricians, 79; printers, 63; laundry workers, 33; helpers, 49; dressmakers, 127; telephone operators, 200; tailors, 17; milliners, 54; teamsters, 17; messengers, 14; plumbers and steam fitters, 11; candy-factory workers, 10; draftsmen, 121; molders, 49; painters, 35; blacksmiths, 27; cabinet-makers, 16; plasterers, 1; teachers, 290; pattern-makers, 18; waitresses, 426; librarians, 5; salesmen and women, 51; railroad employees, 29; delivery boys, 13; tinsmiths, 9; erectors, 13; typesetters, 3; storekeepers and business men, 197; domestics, 273; wood workers, 45; bakers, 9; rubber workers, 20; tanners, 41; farmers, 11; lumbermen, 31; nurses, 10; mechanics, 722; miscellaneous, 3,365; number of teachers, 328.

To meet the needs of this varied mass of students the widest possible variety of courses is offered. Principal Holmes of St. Louis Central High said to the 1,200 students enrolled in his night school:

If you want book learning or actual experience in any line, from the science of trimming bonnets to the plain and practical art of making calculations based on the fourth dimension, the night school will give it to you free of charge. If what you desire to know is not listed among the hundred and one things taught here, find nine others who have a similar yearning and we will find an instructor.

This promise of a class, provided ten people (20 in other cities) want it, results in what seems to be a conglomerate of courses of instruction. We find listed in various cities the following courses: sewing, needlework, cooking, common-school branches, millinery, architectural drafting, carpentry, orchestral work, chorus work, nursing for mothers, plain English for beginners, typewriting, stenography, business arithmetic, business English, bookkeeping, penmanship, freehand drawing, dressmaking, mechanical drawing, plumbing, all the high-school subjects, piano-playing, reinforced concrete construction, blue-print reading, electrical theory, Spanish, and so on indefinitely.

Here is a typical quotation on the subject of courses:

The opportunity for hustling Americans who can speak the native language of Latin-America to get a foothold there has made the Spanish classes popular. There were 200 in the room last night where that branch was taught. There were 210 pupils in one typewriting room and 160 in another at the same time, 370 in all. The classes in agriculture, mechanical science, shorthand, French, electrical and civil engineering also were large. A great percentage of the women pupils are taking millinery, dressmaking, and domestic science.

The expense per pupil is surprisingly light. The ten Wisconsin cities report an expense per pupil of \$7.35. In Minneapolis the expense is \$7.00. This low figure is possible because well-nigh the only expense

is payment for instruction. The school buildings are heated and the expense for lighting is low. Payment to teachers, who are usually employed in the day schools, runs from 65 cents to \$1.00 an hour. Minnesota allows each city six dollars for each night-school pupil under twenty-one years who attends the school 40 nights during the year. Out of 7,000 enrolled last year, 400 secured this aid to Minneapolis. This year the income of Minneapolis from this source is estimated at \$20,000.

In almost every city the school authorities attribute the success of the night-school movement in large part to the support of the employers of labor. In St. Louis employers are calling the attention of their employees to the schools and are urging them to take advantage of the opportunities offered. Notices are posted on bulletin boards in large plants and are distributed among the employees. "One large concern, which needs to employ numbers of new men from time to time, has arranged to call on the night schools for these men, believing that those who are interested enough to attend night schools will make the best employees."

Many indications point to the fact that any city may possibly obtain returns from its investment in night-school instruction, out of all proportion with the returns from day schools. One has only to realize that there are correspondence schools, charging very large fees, which enrol over 100,000 students, most of whom might be better served by resident instruction in their home towns. Moreover, any teacher who has taught in summer sessions knows of the deeper earnestness and effectiveness secured from classes of adults who have been at work, and who are able to see the relation between study and efficiency.